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THE MONROE DOCTRINE FROM A SOUTH AMERICAN VIEWPOINT

*By Honorable Charles H. Sherrill, Envoy Extraordinary
and Minister Plenipotentiary to Argentina, 1909-1911*

In this hemisphere the twentieth century will sooner or later come to be known as the century of the Southerner. Already clear evidence is being shown of the steady strong tendency which must, unless diverted or dissipated by some historical cataclysm, write this title across the century upon which we have entered. And any man concerned in public affairs who does not take into account the viewpoint of the Southerner has no claim to statesmanship, and does not deserve the confidence of his fellows. Nor is this true in our hemisphere alone, but also across the Atlantic as well. For who can fail to have observed the awakening of the Latin races of Europe. Is not the splendid new national spirit of France a significant proof of this movement? And what of the stream of money being constantly transmitted to Italy by her industrious and economical toilers in the harvests and on the railways of both North and South America—toilers who return to their native land and add not only to its public wealth, but also to its worthy citizenship! More marvelous still are the amazing annual increases to be noted in the already impressive foreign trade of Argentina and of Brazil. In our own southern states, are we not witnessing the working out along practical lines of one of commerce's strangest fairy tales? Go to Birmingham or Atlanta or Chattanooga or any of the long list of great modernized cities in the South, and the truth of this proposition will receive ocular demonstration of a surprising completeness. When two years ago upon my return from Argentina I spoke before nearly two hundred commercial organizations, the most instructing experience of all (and there were many) was the realization that municipal col-

lective effort was on the whole better conceived and conducted, and yielding better results, in the south than in any other section. All parts of the United States have come to recognize and to be proud of the New South, and of all it means to the strength of our nation: why are we so reluctant to give the same recognition to the great republics of South America!

I am an enthusiastic Pan-American, and an earnest believer in the high ideals of Pan-Americanism, and one of those ideals is respect for the viewpoint of our fellow Americans. The peoples of our hemisphere have been allowed to develop naturally in an atmosphere of liberty and of ample opportunity, amid surroundings that in Europe the trammels of an older civilization would have rendered either difficult or impossible. This very freedom of the Americas has worked strange and radical changes in the European races that came to it and have become Americanized by its influence. It has accelerated the mentality of the Anglo-Saxon of North America, and it has steadied and broadened the vitality and energy of the Latin of South America, and it is insensibly bringing them nearer together. An interesting ethnological parallel could be drawn between the change effected in an Irishman by moving him from Ireland to New York, and that in a Spanish emigrant before he leaves his home and after he arrives in the subtly Americanizing surroundings of Buenos Aires. If it isn't the new environment that works the transformation, what is it?—and if the same effect is produced at points six thousand miles apart, isn't it fair to call that effect Pan-American! And isn't it fair to consider the viewpoint of the Americanized Latin just as much as that of the Americanized Anglo-Saxon? He is just as much a child of liberty and opportunity as we, and just as worthy of consideration. We hear much of the steadiness and self-control of the Anglo-Saxon, and of the importance that lends to his opinions—when I was in Buenos Aires an anarchist exploded a bomb in the great opera house in the midst of an audience of Pan-American Latins. What happened? First, ask yourself what would have happened if a bomb had exploded in the Metropoli-

tan Opera House among us Anglo-Saxons;—I fear that all of us who are honest minded will reluctantly agree as to the probable results. What happened in Buenos Aires? A remarkable scene, which is a glory to Argentine citizenship. No tumult, no undue excitement. The injured were removed while the orchestra played the national anthem. Announcement was made from the stage that the performance was discontinued, and the audience filed quietly out. If you had been there you would have been as proud of those people as I was—as proud of their poise, and of their reserve strength of character, and furthermore as respectful of their viewpoint, as the most enthusiastic believer in the future of our hemisphere could wish. When I reflect upon that surprising scene, I ask myself why have we throughout all our history constantly disregarded the opinion of our Latin sister republics, and have failed to take them into our councils.

I believe and I affirm that we have almost always sought to be not only just in our dealings with those republics, but also have tried to do what we thought was best for them. But why have we so persistently, so ignorantly, so blunderingly disregarded *their* viewpoint, even carelessly neglected to study it! And what of the Monroe Doctrine in this connection. If a fellow-countryman expresses the opinion that it should be abolished, I say to him "Will you go to the logical conclusion to which that suggestion inevitably leads, and say you are willing that any part of America shall be turned into an Egypt, a Tripoli, an Algeria, or a Morocco?" If he tells me the Monroe Doctrine is good enough as it is, I say to him "Go and live in one of the great countries of South America for a couple of years, learn their point of view, and then tell us if you are contented that our great country, our dear fatherland should go on being misunderstood as a Monroe Doctrine policeman, a clumsy busybody, when you and I know so differently, and when this misunderstanding can be so easily rectified!" Why should we not meet this misunderstanding now existing in South America with the same splendid directness that President Cleveland used in the Venezuela difficulty, or President McKinley in the

Cuban affair! There are friends of mine, dear friends of mine, sleeping beneath the waving grasses on a certain Cuban hillside, and there can be no misunderstanding as to whether or not they laid down their lives for anything else than the highest ideals of Pan-Americanism. And what is the viewpoint of the Latin-American upon the Monroe Doctrine, and how by frankly meeting it can we stop it from seeming to him unilateral and constabulary, and make it Pan-American in scope? Last January, on a day when my heart was deeply touched by receiving through the Argentine Minister a gold medal sent me by the Argentine people, I ventured a brief suggestion upon our to-day's subject, prompted by my knowledge of and love for our Pan-Americanized Latin brothers. This suggestion was, thanks to three powerful institutions (one Argentine, and the other two in New York), cabled to nearly three hundred Latin-American newspapers. That they unanimously approved the suggestion emboldens me to quote from it today, since that wide approval indicates that my heart must have helped my head to grasp their viewpoint.

After first strongly opposing intervention in Mexico, I said: "Let us see if this present discussion of intervention may not perhaps afford an opportunity to set us right upon the subject of the Monroe Doctrine in the eyes of all Latin America, and at the same time provide a possible solution of the very question of intervention itself. Now, for my new suggestion: Suppose affairs should take so serious a turn in Mexico that, either to forestall an armed intervention there by some European power seeking to defend its citizens or else to perform like service for some citizens of our own hemisphere, it finally becomes necessary under the terms of the Monroe Doctrine that the United States intervene, I would suggest that we invite Argentina or Brazil or some other American country to join with us. What would be the result of such an invitation? It would have two marked tendencies, both of which would be highly desirable: First, it would entirely remove any idea among our South American neighbors that our purpose was land grabbing, because a man does not invite

his neighbors to accompany him on an errand intended to benefit him alone. Secondly, and in my opinion, of equal importance, it would free our government from the persistent importunities of individuals and corporations urging our sole intervention to benefit their own pockets, but who would not favor a joint intervention by us along with other powers. Furthermore it would be the best and most convincing form of invitation to Latin America to participate equally with us in the responsibilities and development of the Monroe Doctrine. The great Doctrine would at once become continental, and cease to be unilateral, which is to-day its one great defect. It is not the duty of the United States to police Latin America, and the sooner we get that idea spread broadcast, not only in South America but also in North America, the better will it be for our international repute. Whenever under the terms of the Monroe Doctrine, an occasion for armed intervention in this hemisphere arises, let us, in each and every instance, invite participation in that responsibility from other American countries, all of which are equally concerned in the benefits and responsibilities of that Doctrine."

That was what I said last January, and I feel it even more strongly today.

I hope and believe that there will be no armed intervention in Mexico, and in his resolute effort to obviate the necessity therefor, President Wilson deserves the support of every patriotic citizen of our country. Whatever may be the personal opinion of individuals as to details or methods, this is no time to discuss them, lest the discussion be misunderstood abroad.

I don't claim to know the South Americans better than many others do, but I do claim that no foreigner has ever liked them better than I do, and therefore am I earnestly eager to have their opinion seriously studied, and courteously accorded the consideration which it richly deserves.